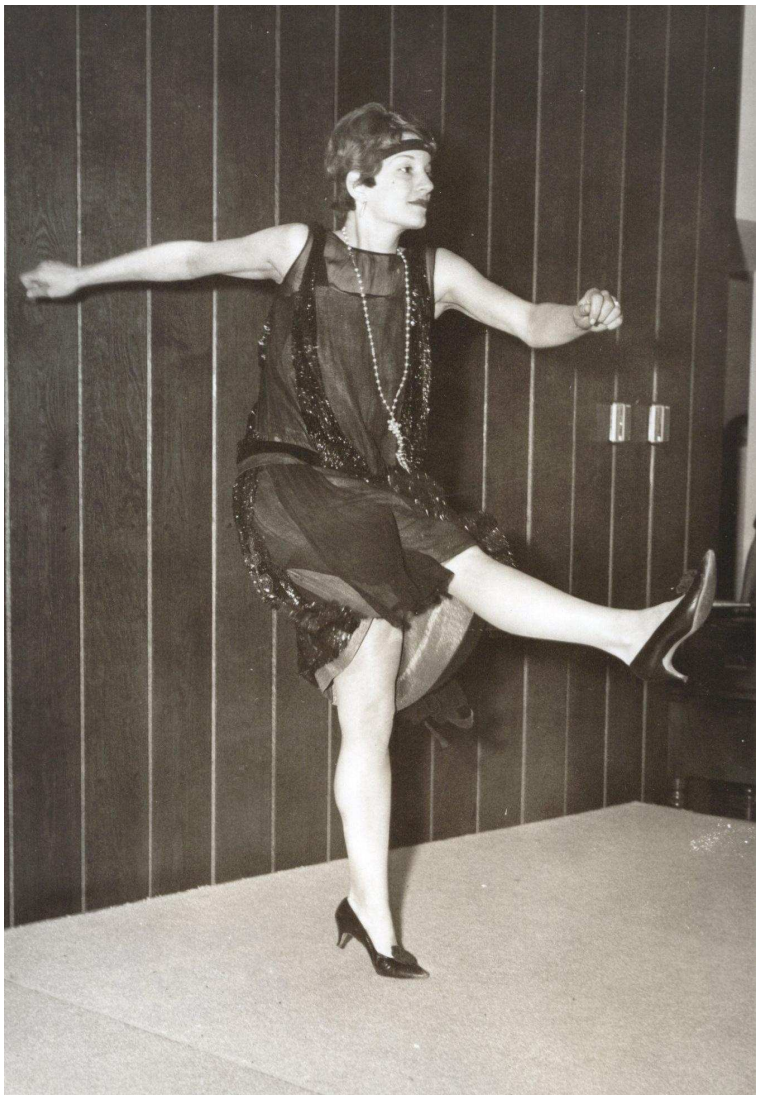
Skit about the first fifty years of the Women's College Club of Princeton

Performed during the 50th anniversary lunch on Feb 7, 1966



With photos of the event

ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

Presented at the luncheon February 7, 1966

(Note: The Anniversary Committee thoroughly enjoyed making the acquaintance of 50 years of the Women's College Club. As is always the case, a great deal of pertinent material had to be omitted for lack of space and, in this instance, time. The narrators and other players in the production were costumed according to period, and other bits of action added to the few indicated here. We hope you will enjoy a light-hearted backward glance. We did.)

(Early 1900's - Waltz Music)

NARRATION, First Year, 1916

Princeton in the winter of 1916 had all the aspects of a small town, and its doings were reported weekly in the Princeton Press. President Wilson had just married Mrs. Edith Bolling Galt. Billy Sunday was preaching several times each month, coming out from Trenton. Ida Tarbell spoke at the Present Day Club. A sketch of the proposed new borough hall enhanced the front page of a January issue. Eggs were selling at twenty cents a dozen and the Princeton Bank and Trust Company reported December 31st, 1915 total assets of just over 2 million. Local women lent their efforts to the suffrage movement, and the Audubon Society campaigned for a "Feed the Birds" program.

Amid reports of Evangelist Gypsy Smith's local prayer meetings, urgent Red Cross appeals for aid to France and Belgium, and a subscription campaign by the paper itself, there appeared in the April 28th issue a report that a canvass of the town had reported 97 residents eligible for membership in the Women's College Club. Forty seven of them had already joined the group. Following a plea to the remaining 50 for their support was this report:

"A Finance Committee has been formed to place the plans of the club before all women of the town who may be interested in the other phase of our work, that of assisting the young women of Princeton who need some financial assistance in continuing their studies. As stated above every woman in Princeton is eligible to this associate membership and it is earnestly hoped that the kindly interest which so many women are showing the girls in our town schools may be extended to this next step in their education."

Jane Greswold and Frances VanWinkle
presenting

That the new committee had an immediate problem is revealed in this front page report from the June 2nd Packet:

Three Hundred Dollar Campaign

"At the regular spring meeting of the College Women's Club, the question of raising funds was the most important matter under consideration. Several plans had been discussed previously by the Finance Committee, that of giving a play having found much favor. However, so many activities (even then!) had already been crowded into the few remaining weeks of Princeton's year as to make it advisable to postpone this event until late October.

"Requests for loans had already been made to the Committee, so the need of a fund available in the early fall was felt to be imperative. To meet this situation the Club voted to start a three hundred dollar campaign and divide the work of raising the money by asking each member to assume responsibility for a five dollar share.

"The Executive Committee makes a two-fold appeal -- urging upon Club members renewed activity and bespeaking from the public at large a generous response. While the club as a whole realizes the many demands made upon this community at all times, it feels impelled to give this important work needed publicity."

During that period of May into June Princetonians as a whole did not appear to be public spirited. A correspondent to the Packet is concerned about this as evidenced by the Memorial Day Parade. He writes that it was a "mere farce in every sense of the word and a disgrace to Princeton." There were 13 members of Company L, 1 Negro Boy Scout and "Ig" Hoff's Fife and Drum Corps (3 pieces) and "the last six or seven remaining heroes without one automobile to help them tottering along to the cemeteries." However difficult the problem seemed, behind the scenes the Finance Committee was exploring every avenue towards its solution. At the June 8 meeting of the Women's College Club notices were to be sent to all those who had not responded with the five dollars. Fifty dollars had already been received in contributions and twelve dollars from the addition of twelve new members. A loan committee was appointed to have charge of funds and interview the girls who wished to receive loans. A decision was made to hold some meetings late enough for the Laboratory workers to attend. A committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of getting summer work for girls.

The immediate problem of the loan committee was that three girls had applied for loans of 50, 100, and 150 dollars, and that one girl had

Dorothy Wagner presenting

asked for any amount which could be offered. Even with $100 borrowed from the High School Alumni Association, the club treasury was still inadequate for these needs. During the summer two of the loan applications were withdrawn, and grants of $125 were made to each of the remaining two girls.

In late summer a young lady entered an urgent plea for money to supplement an available scholarship. A clergyman raised $75 to assist her and the club was asked for $200. A member of the Alumni Association loaned $100, and the other $100 was available in the club treasury. Seven months after organization the club had loaned $350 of its $352.50 balance. The club still had to find the money to reimburse the generous individual who had loaned $100, but Women's College Club had met its first challenge successfully.

With its first three protegees safely embarked on their college careers, the Executive Board, at the October meeting, concerned itself with developing plans for a project that would bring money to the depleted treasury. Anticipating a large influx of visitors for the Yale-Princeton game, the Board decided to serve a luncheon. The November 24th Packet reported on this venture as follows:

"The Women's College Club of Princeton served lunch on Saturday to a large number of visitors, thereby adding a considerable sum to its treasury. The hearty appreciation with which this effort was met on the part of our townspeople, as well as from strangers coming in for the day, encourages the club to think of repeating the experiment on a larger scale. On this occasion Mrs. Fielder gave the use of her house at 67 Prospect Avenue, the tables and chairs were loaned by the First Presbyterian Church and tableware by the Methodist Church. The active cooperation of the pupils of the High School was most gratifying. The committee takes this opportunity to thank the large number of friends whose helpfulness made this undertaking a success." Actually, 45,000 persons flocked to that Yale-Princeton game, in 6000 automobiles.

Princetonians that autumn were collecting books for English prisoners in Germany and seeing Mary Pickford on the movie screen at Struve's Arcade. As 1916 drew to a close, 1200 persons shared $32,000 in Christmas Club accounts at a local bank, and 41 members of Women's College Club enjoyed a delightful tea, following their meeting, at the home of the chairman.

A new organization was solidly established in the Princeton community, its direction set, and three young women were on their way to college degrees because of the effort and vision of the women who founded Women's College Club of Princeton.

Lauren Elden and Anita Vivian

(World War I Music)

NARRATION, 1917-1927

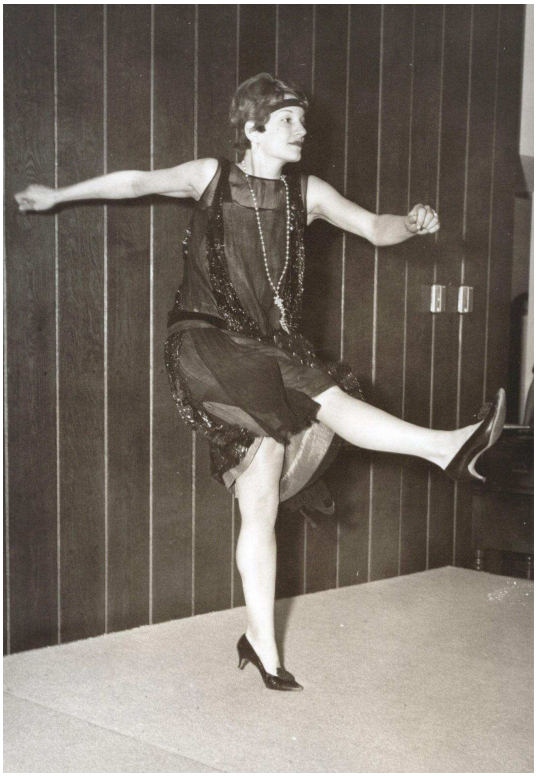
The decade from 1917 to 1927 was the era of jazz and H. L. Mencken, of Woodrow Wilson and back to normalcy with Harding, of Sacco-Vanzetti, and the Hall-Mills murder, of a younger generation running wild, of jobs for women, short skirts, Teapot Dome and Al Capone. In May of 1927 a disillusioned people, spiritually starved and tired of crime and scandals, responded to a feat that captured every imagination. Charles Augustus Lindbergh flew alone from New York to Paris in his single-engine plane. The nation never loved a hero more.

Against this postwar background, Women's College Club grew to 105 members by 1920. During the summers of 1917 and 1918 members earned money in such individual projects as growing cabbages, saving tinfoil, and selling newspapers. A Woman's Exchange was opened at the YWCA (situated then where Hulit's is now), to be run on a percentage basis. Unfortunately, the embroideries and cookies failed to appeal, and the whole project was handed over to the Y. A commencement luncheon netted $150 and a play by Lawrenceville residents earned $90.

Miss Mabel Douglass, Dean of the College of New Jersey, was a speaker at Women's College Club. Her infant college enrolled nearly 50 girls. Sandwiches sold at football games added to club coffers. In Thomson (now Borough) Hall the Farr Hardware orchestra played for dances where a campus policeman took tickets. Mothers brought their daughters and chaperoned from seats along the wall. For couples desiring conversation, a few chairs and potted palms decorated what is now the police court.

One of our former presidents tells of making hundreds of sandwiches to be sold at a University Reunion. Unhappily, so few were sold that she and her husband filled cartons and clothes baskets with unsold sandwiches and dumped them at midnight into the piggery of a farm where Princeton Hospital now stands.

With all this diligent activity on the part of members, Women's College Club prospered. Their new affluence inspired club members to offer $5 prizes for improvement in the use of clear, grammatical English. The end of the first decade of its existence found College Club firmly established and branching out in its activities.



Rachel Thompson
dancing the Charlston

Skit by Lucy Harkey and
Nancy Robins

("Charleston" music and dancer)

(Music of the 30's)

NARRATION, 1927-1936

This era was marked by two peaks in economic life in 1928 and 1929, a period of wild prosperity for some 24,000 people with incomes exceeding $100,000. It was followed by a period known as the low 30's, when bonds such as those of the Hotel Robert Treat (Newark), held by College Club, failed to pay interest. Banks, faced with panic withdrawal of funds, were temporarily closed, with 90% reopening. This was the era of the alphabet agencies, established as part of the New Deal -- TVA, NIRA, NLB, FDIC. Some exist today, others have vanished. Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, and the minimum wage in the United States was 25¢ an hour. The work week was 44 hours, and President Roosevelt was considered radical by some in suggesting a 40-hour week.

In spite of economic hardships, College Club members were anything but depressed in spirit. Activities included trips, lectures, recitals, a play, a puppet show, teas and discussion meetings. For the first time postcards were sent to the membership announcing the now bi-monthly programs. One hundred dollars was donated to the Princeton Public Library for the purchase of non-fiction books, and books for merchant seamen were collected. At the request of Princeton University, Women's College Club agreed to handle the University's extension courses, a project which proved profitable financially as well as intellectually.

(Following the narration, a brief dramatized interview between a "scholarship committee" and an "applicant" is presented. Points emphasized include the current cost of college; the lack of jobs available for high school girls; the difficulty of repaying loans; the high calibre of applicants. Happily, our girl wins.)

(Music of the 40's - nostalgic)

NARRATION, 1937-1946

The third decade of Women's College Club passed against the background of the Second World War. Faraway places and strange names like Saipan, Okinawa and Tinian became all too familiar. At home Americans bought savings bonds, traded ration stamps, knit for the Red Cross, and coped with V-Mail.

Eva Wilson holding a bottle of Walker whiskey and Olive Holnback wearing a WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) uniform

Near the end of the war the Club, having tried various quarters -- Palmer Square Auditorium (second floor above what is now Langrocks), Present Day Club, and private homes -- was meeting at the Nassau Elementary School. One can sympathize with the hospitality chairman, carting all those cups and saucers from place to place! Possibilities for a permanent home were considered, but after much discussion it was decided that buying or renting a clubhouse was too precarious a venture.

During 1938 and 1939 the Club faced a new challenge -- what to do with all its money. Money-making projects and astute investment policies, added to a growing membership, had produced a handsome sum. One step taken was the presentation of four scholarships in 1944. An interesting letter found in the club files reveals that the investment chairman had considered Hiram Walker a good investment possibility but had rejected it because she feared some raised eyebrows among the Club members.

Lecture courses, begun in 1935, used the talents of many Princeton University professors. Courses ran the gamut from modern art, world politics, contemporary sculpture, architecture and painting to "Children in Wartime." Professor Osgood gave a course and returned his fee to the Club; the following year the Club offered the Osgood Scholarship. These lecture courses, which added handsomely to the treasury, were actually the forerunner of the present Adult School, which last term enrolled 1200 students. Similarly, the Club's College Guidance Seminars at the High School preceded the extensive College Guidance programs of today.

All was not roses, however. The Club sponsored a concert at McCarter Theatre for the benefit of Greek children. Barely enough was collected to pay the orchestra, and the profit of $3.85 went into the Club's treasury, not to the Greek orphans.

The Club's ability to meet the needs of girls applying for scholarships allowed money and effort for more activity within the Club itself. The organization acquired such professional touches as a new printed directory and an outside audit of the Club books. No longer desperately concerned with the need to secure money, the Club bought its own silver tea service, for $58, and embarked on a series of neighborhood teas for new members. Women's College Club had most successfully weathered the depression and World War II.

Lucy Morton, puppeteer, illustrating
the 40th anniversary in 1946,
and Beatrice Gorman

(Music of the 50's)

NARRATION, 1947-1956

The decade from 1947-1956 was marked by tension in international relations. The Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine were pitted against the powers of a shoe-banging communist leader and an emerging oriental menace. Congressional investigating committees made headlines and McCarthyism gave many pause for thought. A Princeton University graduate and presidential candidate made news with a hole in the sole of his shoe. The Supreme Court's 1954 decision on school segregation brought the Princeton Plan to the nation's attention.

Best-seller lists included Hemingway, Faulkner, and Princeton resident John O'Hara. A girl named Grace Kelly typified the new kind of American movie star, while T. S. Eliot's "Cocktail Party" gave new status to an institution that sometimes seemed to dominate the Princeton weekend. In 1954 many College Club members helped initiate a lively enterprise, as the first annual Fete netted $9,947 for Princeton Hospital.

In 1947 members of Women's College Club were again seeking a new meeting place. They decided on Avalon, former home of Henry van Dyck, and presently the site of the YMCA. This proved a comfortable home, and something new was added, a baby sitting service. Everybody (except the mother) enjoyed it when a child escaped the sitter and joined us. Fledgling ballerinas, taking a break from their plies, also wandered in, while the steam pipes banged out an uneven rhythm.

Many changes took place in the Club in these years. The Executive Board voted to increase scholarship awards according to the need of the times, and several special scholarships were awarded. The qualifications for honorary membership were redefined in the Constitution. In 1956 dues were raised to $3.50, of which $1.25 was specifically designated for scholarship. Apparently the sense of affluence of the previous decade did not last. But enough members were interested in giving their blood to warrant a Blood Donors Chairman.

With increasing membership we found it difficult to remember names as well as faces, so name tags were adopted for the meetings. As another means of getting to know each other better, as well as adding to the treasury, chain food baskets were started. These proved hilarious, though not particularly lucrative; but if you were on the receiving end of a tuna-fish casserole, and your family was allergic to fish, or on the giving end of a chocolate cake, which left the house amid your children's tears, you know the pitfalls of this endeavor. It netted us $70.36, and gave us something to laugh over for years.

Anne Plumb narrating,
Marjorie VanSant joining a study group

Mary Rice as school girl
loaded with catalogues

We celebrated our 40th Anniversary with a special party. We had a luncheon at the Nassau Tavern with past presidents and charter members as guests. We were especially pleased because Town Topics named us "Club of the Week." During this anniversary year our membership rose to 401, and once again we embarked on another new project. This time we planned and gave a Christmas party for children of members and their guests. We presented a very successful puppet show, and the children enjoyed it almost as much as we did. We're sure the University and Murray-Dodge Hall have not forgotten the event either.

The fall of 1956 and the tearing down of Avalon found us on the move once more. Our meetings were now to be held in the Princeton High School.

(Hospitality Chairman staggers through with loaded tray piled high with cups and saucers.)

(Music of the 60's)

NARRATION, 1957-1966

The late fifties found the Club busy as ever. The post of Neighborhood Activities Chairman was created to coordinate the burgeoning neighborhood teas and coffees and to expose prospective members to life in College Club. Afternoon meetings were held at the Present Day Club and evening meetings in the High School Social Room.

(Hospitality Chairman staggers through with loaded tray.)

In 1959 five different study groups were organized. The topics might be of interest -- Legal Finance, Pre-School Child, Books of Edith Hamilton, Bridge, and Home Renovating. Picture a member trying to study the works of Edith Hamilton, with a pre-school child, at home, who was talked into playing bridge while her house was being renovated, and who then had both legal and financial, and probably marital, problems.

As hemlines crept up above the knee and the "natural" hairdo encircled milady's (and some gentlemen's) shoulders, the sixties ushered in some events which proved the population explosion rocked our peaceful village. Miss Fine's and Princeton Country Day merged, moved, and became the Princeton Day Schools located on the Great Road. The University planned and built for the future, adding a new engineering complex, the Woodrow Wilson building, the new South building, dorms, and an architecture center. A chap named Bill Bradley touched our lives.

Left: Rosemary Aiken ("hospitality chairman") holding a carton of china, Next to her, from left to right: Virginia Merill, Eva Mae Stanmore, Jean Gorman, Lucy Morton, Marjorie VanSant, Mary Rice, Elizabeth Magill, Anne Plumb;
Back left to right: Jane Gresshold, Francis VanWinkle, Dorothy Wagner, Tita Vivian, Lauren Elden, Rachel Thompson, Frances Hedberg (hidden), Nancy Robins. Lucy Harkey (hidden), Olive Holnback

Regionalization was the keyword for 1965. Our community grew like Topsy. Where soybeans and corn had flourished, split levels and ranch types multiplied. College requirements stiffened and everyone spoke in the language of SAT's and College Boards. College costs soared, with $3,000 an average price for board, room and tuition.

Meanwhile, College Club members turned their thoughts to the scholarships given each year. By 1963 the Founder's Award had been raised to $400, the Memorial Award to $300 and the Anniversary Award to $600, for a total of $1300, exclusive of special scholarship awards.

In 1961 the Club's membership reached a high of 419. Study groups discussed the role of women through the ages in the fields of religion, politics and society. Dolls dressed in period costumes were made and maps were prepared, along with carefully researched papers. A new Great Books group continued to expand, and some courageous Club members tackled the new approach to mathematics. Members also traveled to such diverse destinations as the Boehm aviaries, New Jersey Neuro-Psychiatric Institute, the colonial houses of Philadelphia, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The new Unitarian Church provided, at last, a meeting place for members and a home for our china and our silver tea service.

Princeton in the winter of 1966 still has all the aspects of a small town, and doings are still dutifully reported in a lively local press. President Goheen has just explained the University's need for a high rise structure on the campus. Controversial figures from public life appear regularly under the auspices of undergraduate groups. Miss Fine's School has been torn down and a new borough hall will take its place. Eggs are fifty-nine cents a dozen and the Princeton Bank and Trust Company reports December 31, 1965 total assets of just under 60 million dollars. The crusading zeal that marked the suffrage movement now marks other causes, while thoughtful women are concerned that too few of them exercise the right for which they battled half a century ago.

Princeton of 1966 has cause to be grateful for the foresight of a group of women who recognized the need to bring intelligent efforts to bear on the admission of young women to college and to find the means to make their study possible.

In fifty years much has changed and much remains essentially the same. In the dynamic society of 1966, the college woman fills a variety of roles in Princeton as around the world. The members of Women's College Club face new and perhaps undreamed-of challenges in making college possible for girls, and a college education meaningful for themselves.